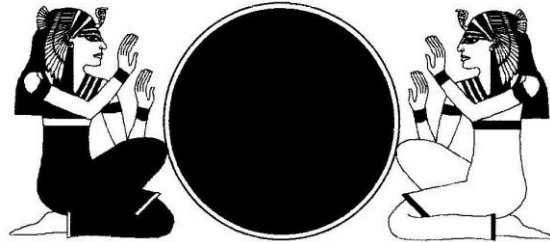


Temple of the Dark Moon



Difference between Wicca and Wytchcraft

By Frances Billinghamurst © 2008

There are numerous definitions as to what Wicca and Wytchcraft are. Some people perceive them to be interchangeable words, others not. The Temple of the Dark Moon falls into the latter category in that we believe that there is a difference between Wicca and Wytchcraft. We present the following explanation as to why we hold this view.

A BRIEF DEFINITION OF WICCA

Wicca is a religion that honours Divinity through polarity – the Divine Masculine (the God) and the Divine Feminine (the Goddess). It contains within its practice a tradition of initiation and oral teaching that some people believe can be traced back to the Mystery traditions of Eleusis. Traditional Wicca (ie, that based upon what Gerald Gardner founded in the late 1940s) is best described as:

“... initiatory, oathbound, magick-using, Pagan mystery priesthood, dedicated to the Great Goddess and Her consort the Horned God, and celebrating its Mysteries through eight Sabbats and 13 Esbats.”¹

Wicca is also a “Mystery” religion in that through understanding the multiple layers, the initiate gains insight and thus entry into these “Mysteries”. No one can actually be taught the “Mysteries”, only be provided with the keys which, hopefully will unlock the doors behind which the “Mysteries” await. Still it is very much for the seeker, the initiate to themselves step through those doors to fully grasp a proper understanding of what they seek. This is one of the aspect of the role of initiation – however it should be pointed out that it is not the only way. There are those adept enough who are able to discover the keys

¹ Dianis Lucien, StarKindler Tradition

for themselves and who are able to step through the door and into the “Mysteries” without such much as a guide, a mentor/teacher.

A further explanation as to what is meant by Wicca being a “Mystery” religion is that hat the experiences which occur are often very hard to communicate in words, and in doing so, usually distort in the telling. They are best understood and appreciated through the actual personal experience. “Mysteries” are an outcome of our individual connection with Divinity – our work with the God and Goddess. As part of our own spiritual growth, each member actively engages in the building of their own relationship with the Divine and seeks out the pathways that will lead to them experiencing the “Mysteries” for their own selves.

To an non-initiate this may seem elictist – and in a way it is. However, the “Mysteries” of Wicca are open to anyone who wishes to undertake the time to learn them. They are seen as “a way” – not the only way – in gaining spiritual enlightenment or to use occult terminology “communication with one’s Holy Guardian Angel”.

Similar to other religions and spiritual traditions, Wicca has its own specific codes of ethics and morals that the follower aims to live their life by, the most central is the “Wiccan Rede”, or more appropriately the last two lines of a 26 lined poem alleged to have been authored by Gwen Thompson .. *“an if it harm none, then do as thy wilt”*. These lines are believed to be an adaptation of Aleister Crowley’s “Thelemic Oath” that being:

“Do what thou wilt is the Whole of the Law. Love is the Law. Love under Will.”

The Wiccan Rede has caused much misunderstanding which is why considerable time is taken to explain the “true” or correct meaning within both our one day workshop, “Introduction to Wicca” and our six week training course.

Who has the “right” to classify themselves as Wiccan? Technically only those initiated into traditional Wicca (see Starkindler Tradition’s description). However, considering Gardner actually called the followers of Wicca “Wytches” as opposed to “Wiccans”, and due to the considerable changes that have occurred since his death in the 1960s, the Temple of the Dark Moon acknowledges anyone who abides by the Wiccan code of ethics and morals, and in particular the belief of polarity of Deity.

A BRIEF DEFINITION OF WYTCHCRAFT

The word “Wytchcraft” is a highly emotive word even today in the 21st century. It again has numerous meanings and translations. As indicated above, Gardner referred to the followers of Wicca as “Witches”. These days the words Wiccan and Wytch appear to be just as changeable as Wicca and Witchcraft. However, there are those who perceive Wytchcraft as a more aboriginal spiritual path of Europe that existed long before Gardner. This form of the Craft is probably more closely aligned with Shamanism that modern neo-Pagan Wicca.

It is for this reason that the Temple have adopted the spelling of “Wytchcraft” with a ‘y’ relating to non-Gardnerian and certainly non modern neo-Pagan orientated Witchcraft. Examples of what we refer to as Wytchcraft can be found within the practices of the late Robert Cochrane, Andrew Chumbley’s Tubal Cain and other similar influences and examples from which we draw inspiration from.

A further point that is often debated is the etymological meaning of the word “Wytch”. Many books on modern Wytchcraft will mention that the word **witch** is derived from the word **wicca**, and that this used to mean either (a) the bend or shape, or (b) to know. From the latter, we often hear that the term **witchcraft** means *craft of the wise ones*. Both of the above meanings are poetic, but incorrect.

According to Professor J.B. Russell in his book *A History of Witchcraft - Sorcerors, Pagans and Heretics* (Thames & Hudson), the ultimate origin of the word **witch** is an Indo-European word **weik**. This word had four families of derivatives and all have something to do with magick and religion. The most relevant of these derivatives is the word **wikk**, which simply meant magic or sorcery. From this particular source came the Middle German word **widden** which means *to predict*. Then came the Old English word **wicca**, which was pronounced *witcha* and was used to designate a male witch; with **wicce**, pronounced *witcheh*, and was used to designate a female witch. From these words came the Middle English term **witche** and this word eventually became the Modern English equivalent - **witch**.

Therefore, the original meaning of the word **witch** can be traced back through various forms to simply mean exactly the same thing - a witch. When Gerald Gardner wrote down his ideas about witchcraft, he chose to pronounce the word **wicca** as *wikka* (instead of its original form, *witcha*), and by consensus (or sheer ignorance), this is now how everyone pronounces the word.

As aside, the word **wizard** is derived from the Middle English word **wis** and appeared around the year 1440 meaning *wise man* or *wise woman* - and it is only after 1825 that the word was used in a magickal sense.

The term **warlock** originally meant an oath breaker, or traitor. In approximately 1460 it was equated to the word **witch**. It was applied equally to both female as well as male witches, and there seems to be no historical justification for using the word warlock to specifically designate a male witch. Today it seems that only Hollywood movie makers still use the term in this way.

Whenever time permits, the Temple of the Dark Moon offers an introductory six part course, “The Wytch’s Circle”, in relation to Wicca, Wytchcraft and magick. Upon completion of this course, students may also be invited to join the Temple’s Outer Court to continue their instruction if they so desire. More information about “The Wytch’s Circle” and its availability is contained on our web site.

About the Author:

Frances has been a student of metaphysics and the occult for most of her life, with her formal training having commenced in 1993. She has been initiated into the Alexandrian Wicca tradition, with interests also in ceremonial magick, the Qabalah and traditional Wytchcraft.

After founding the Temple of the Dark Moon in 1999, Frances spent some six years as secretary for the Pagan Alliance Inc (SA) where she worked closely with both the Police and Attorney General with

respect to changes in legislation. She has led rituals with Chief Druid, Philip Carr-Gomm, and occult philosophy Ramsay Dukes, as well as presented lectures at various national and international events.

Frances regularly writes for *Insight*, Australia's number one spiritual lifestyle magazine, with her articles also appearing in over 10 separate publications, including *Spellcraft*, *The Cauldron*, *Circle* and the Llewellyn's *Witch's Calendar*. She has further essays in a number of anthologies including *The Faerie Queens*, *Unto Herself: A Devotional Anthology for Independent Goddesses*, and *Memento Mori*.

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